

# ASPINOCK HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## FALL 2025 NEWSLETTER

### Putnam History Makers Award Recipients Honored



**Fabiola Cutler and Leo C. Tetreault were honored in a ceremony December 11 at the Putnam Lodge of Elks.**

Emcee John Miller, President of the [Aspinock Historical Society of Putnam CT](#) presented the Putnam History Maker award to Fabiola Cutler who could not make it to the ceremony. Mayor Barney Seney accepted the award on behalf of Cutler and announced that he and former Recreation Director Willie Bousquet would deliver the award to Cutler the next day. The second Putnam History Maker award was awarded posthumously to Leo "Cam" Tetreault and was accepted by Tetreault's grandson Matt Wester on behalf of the family who was also in attendance.

Credit: WINY Radio

The Aspinock Historical Society of Putnam, in partnership with the Putnam Recreation Department, is proud to announce the recipients of the Annual Putnam History Maker Awards. This prestigious award honors individuals who have made, or are still making, an honorable and positive, direct or indirect, major impact on the area through their works, deeds, and service, whether done in Putnam and/or globally with ties to the town.

The Putnam History Maker Award recognizes contributions from any resident or non-resident of Putnam, living or deceased, whose impact is felt locally or globally, in the spotlight or quietly behind the scenes.

Fabiola Cutler and Leo C. Tetreault have been selected for their outstanding commitment and significant contributions that embody the spirit of this award. Their dedication has left a lasting, positive mark on our community.

"The History Maker Award is our way of celebrating the people who have shaped Putnam into the wonderful place it is today," said a representative from the Aspinock Historical Society. "We are thrilled to honor Fab Cutler and Leo Tetreault, two individuals whose commitment to service truly exemplifies what it means to be a History Maker."

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### Local Author Chronicles Flood Memories

Putnam native Ronald P. Coderre is proud to announce the release of a booklet he's written about his experiences and memories of The Flood of 1955.

"August 19, 1955 is one of the most significant days in the 170-year history of the community of Putnam. For those old enough to remember, it's the day the town was taken by surprise and devastated by the flooding waters of the Quinebaug and French Rivers," said Coderre.

"The oral history of that day and those that followed is becoming more distant every year. For that reason and others, I felt it was important to put the memories I have, as a 14-year-old boy at the time, in print. It's 70 years since that fateful day and worth remembering," said Coderre author of the booklet.

Coderre, a veteran of the United States Air Force (1959-1965) and 1959 graduate of Putnam High School, has been writing locally for more than 40 years



Ronald Coderre signs copies of his book during a recent talk and book signing event at the AHS Museum. His book is available for purchase at that location. Proceeds from sales go to the AHS.



## Did You Know?

"You have a real gem here", commented famous author David McCullough. The Pulitzer Prize winning historian was referring to local historical landmark Cady Copp Cottage. The structure, built in 1745, was used for tutoring young men preparing for higher education, including Yale University applicants.

Two local residents, Menasseh Cutler and his son Ephraim figured prominently in McCullough's book, "The Pioneers". This book detailed the settlement of the Northwest Territories of the United States in the early 1800's. Research had shown that Manasseh, after graduating from Yale, was instrumental in the prohibition of slavery in this newly established territory.

Louise Cutler Pempek had sent McCullough a handwritten invitation to visit Putnam, which he enthusiastically accepted. His visit helped him with some last minute revisions to his manuscript before publication. After his visit, McCullough wrote Louise a personal note thanking her for her interest in his book, which was published in 2019.

I invite you to read "The Pioneers" to learn more about how some of our local folk helped shape the history of this country.

*Researched and written by Sandra Cutler Ames*

# America's Quest For Freedom

*Researched and written by Jeanne Benoit*

250 years ago, the American colonists were in the beginning of a fight for freedom. In Massachusetts in 1770 there was a Massacre between the British soldiers and the colonists. In 1773 the colonists refused to pay taxes on British tea that was in ships in Boston harbor. If the ships were not emptied by a certain date the British would empty them. The colonist's reaction was to "Dump" the tea into Boston harbor. The King got angry when the money for the dumped tea was not paid, and closed the port of Boston. He put British ships there. The problem was the city got most of its food from shipping. The plan was to starve the people and they would give up.

New Englanders were not going to be stopped. Especially in this part of Connecticut the farmers were already practicing for a fight. Local militias were practicing on the green area in Putnam Heights. Today that is in the area of Cady Copp cottage. They were ready and when they heard about the food shortage in Boston and they took action.

The colonists from Northeastern Connecticut walked sheep from Putnam Heights to Boston to feed the city. The route which is still in existence, is today's route 16 in Massachusetts which starts in Webster at Price Choppers and ends in Boston.

Freedom was the most important thing to this area and we did all we could to help in the war effort.

## AMERICA 250 - America's SemiQuincentennial

July 4, 2026 will mark the date of America's 250<sup>th</sup> Birthday. It is the day when the leaders such as John Adams, and John Hancock from Massachusetts, Roger Sherman from Connecticut, Benjamin Franklin from Pennsylvania and Thomas Jefferson from Virginia voted to adopt the Declaration of Independence in its final form. The purpose of the new government is stated: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal; and endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness" The final line states that "we mutually pledge to each other our lives, our fortunes and our sacred honor." They knew once they signed the Declaration that as Ben Franklin stated, "We need to hang together because most assuredly we will hang separately." They knew they were targets of the British King and if America lost the war, they were marked as traitors and yet liberty and freedom for everyone was the most important thing.

America 250 is a way of Celebrating this birthday. All of towns in Northeastern CT are working together to share their history and to create new history. The Putnam Public Library is also working with us as they received a grant to share Ken Burn's American Revolution program. We are trying to involve the next generation as we are working with local schools to involve the students. The plan is to share all history so the Memories of the Flood is a perfect example of sharing historical memories.

If you have any ideas or memories you would like to share, please reach out to the Society. We would be glad to include you in our memories of this historical event. ***Jeanne Benoit of the Aspinock Historical Society***

# Let's Take A Look Back at the Fall of 1955

By Ken A. Evans



Images from The Windham County Observer - Left: an ad from Grube Camera Shop sounded an optimistic note, urging people to remember the past but record a hopefully better tomorrow through their photos. Right: Arlene Francis, television and stage personality, is shown with Glenn Mauer, left, chairman of the Putnam Chamber of Commerce, and Mayor John Dempsey in the area of Belding Heminway Corticelli. Miss Francis came to Putnam to complete a film for NBC television on the flood reconstruction program, which aired November 23, 1955.

The year 1955 was a pivotal year in the history of Putnam, Connecticut. A celebration of the town's centennial founding took place in July, only to be followed weeks later by a disastrous flood which changed the town forever. This year marks the 70th anniversary of the flood and also the publication of Ron Coderre's memories of a teenager during that event. I thought it would be interesting to look back and see how Putnam was coping in the months immediately following that event.

Assistance was very quick in arriving. The headline of the August 31 issue of the *Windham County Observer* read, "Recovery of Business, Industry to be Speeded Up." The article reported that local headquarters were set up to coordinate relief efforts of state and federal agencies. Within a week after the flood the Connecticut Light and Power had restored electrical service to virtually all but "mire and silt isolated customers."

Financial aid was also quick in arriving to this stricken community. Within a few weeks Bishop Bernard Flanagan forwarded a check for \$20,000 to the Putnam Disaster Relief Fund, "to be used to alleviate suffering in the area." Putnam mayor John Dempsey received a check for \$41,250 from the U.S Army Corps of Engineers for the removal of flood debris.

It should also be noted that the 95th Woodstock Fair was cancelled in 1955, one of the very few times in its long history the fair has not been held.

By the middle of September 1955 land was leased for 60 temporary housing units on property owned by Elliott Whittemore, Mrs Joseph Schmanska, and the Mancini Family on Walnut and Farrows Streets. This later became the location of the Hampshire Heights Housing Project.

In the wake of the 1955 Flood disaster life in Putnam was moving on as evidenced by ads in the *Windham County Observer*. Weiss Pioneer Super Market advertised pork chops for .45/lb., hamburg 3 lbs. for .99, potatoes 10lb. Bag for .25, Grade A medium eggs 2 dozen for \$1.00

Going to the Elks Ball? Bugbees Department Store advertised their brand new collection of party dresses from \$8.98 to \$19.98. You could ride to the ball in style in a 1956 Cadillac Sedan deVille from Putnam Sales and Service for around \$5,000.

Putnam High School won the annual Thanksgiving football game in 1955, defeating Killingly High School 13 to 6.

**Fabiola Cutler**, affectionally known as “Fab”, is a prime example of a Putnam History Maker. A charter member of the Aspinock Historical Society since its beginning in 1972, she has served as recording secretary and later as president. She later transitioned into the role of archivist, a position she continues to hold today. Fab is the author of “The Mayors of Putnam 1985-2004,” and co-authored with Sandra Ames “A Stroll Thru Putnam” and “Manhasset Village, Gone but Not Forgotten.”

**Leo C.(Cam) Tetreault**, who passed away at age 92 in 2009, had a long and distinguished career in public service in Putnam. He was mayor of the City of Putnam in 1961 and later from 1973-1977, when he spearheaded the development of Riverside Park and promoted the revitalization of downtown Putnam. Tetreault has served on various committees and boards at the local and state level over the years. He attended St. Mary School, Putnam High School and Annhurst College and was veteran of World War II.

## **Upcoming Programs for America's 250th Anniversary of the Revolution**

*At the Putnam Public Library -200 School Street*

**Putnam Public Library Tiny Art Show:** “Remembering the Revolution”. Exhibit begins Feb. 2nd and runs through the winter

**“Slavery in New England”** with Tom Kelleher of Old Sturbridge Village. (Black History Month Event)  
Wed. Feb. 11 at 6 PM (Snow date Feb. 18)

**“Women in the American Revolution”** with Eric Chandler. (Women’s History Month Event)  
Sat. Mar. 25 at 1 PM

**“The Sons of Liberty in Windham County”** with Bev York. Sat. Apr. 11 at 1 PM

## **VOLUNTEERS ARE NEEDED FOR OUR 2026 SEASON**

Can you spare 2 1/2 hours once a month from May thru October? The Gertrude Warner Boxcar Museum is looking for people to volunteer one shift per month from 11 AM to 1:30 PM or 1:30 PM to 4:00 PM on Saturday or Sunday. It's easy and training will be provided. If you are interested in volunteering as a docent at the Boxcar Museum contact Barbara Scalise at 860-974-1832 or email her at [quassett@gmail.com](mailto:quassett@gmail.com)

We are also looking for volunteers to help staff the Aspinock Historical Museum. Can you spare a few hours each month? If you are interested call the museum at 860-963-6800 Ext. 300

## **In Other News**

There is now a link on our website where electronic payments for membership dues and donations can be made. The website address is <https://putnamaspinockhistsoc.com/>

In social media our Facebook page has 858 followers, Instagram has 230 followers, our Youtube channel has 31 subscribers. Our social media platform continues to grow.

### **Follow us on Facebook and Instagram**

<https://www.facebook.com/AspinockHistoricalSociety>

<https://www.instagram.com/aspinockhistorical>

[https://youtube.com/@AspinockHistoricalSociety?  
si=VZDkriZozo9zWCF5](https://youtube.com/@AspinockHistoricalSociety?si=VZDkriZozo9zWCF5)



**YouTube**

### **Come Visit Us**

The Aspinock Historical Society Museum and Research Center is located on the 2nd floor of the Putnam Municipal Complex at 200 School St., Putnam, CT. It is open Tue, Wed, Thur, 10 AM to 2 PM; and Saturdays by appointment. The Gertrude Warner Boxcar Museum is located on South Main St., Putnam, across the tracks from Union Square. It is open Saturdays and Sundays, May thru October.

*Both museums are handicap accessible.*

Visit us to learn about Putnam's history through our displays and archives.

### **Submitting News - Ken A. Evans, Newsletter Editor**

I encourage Aspinock Historical Society members to submit news and information to be included in our quarterly newsletter. You can email me at [kaevans1969@sbcglobal.net](mailto:kaevans1969@sbcglobal.net) or leave material for me at the Aspinock Historical Society facility at 200 School St., Putnam.